



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Sacramento, Delevan, Colusa and Sutter National Wildlife Refuges

July, 2005 Planning Update #1

Public Meetings
Please join us for the
following Open Houses

July 6, 2005
Willows, CA

July 12, 2005
Colusa, CA

July 14, 2005
Yuba City, CA

See page 6 for details.



USFWS photo

Comprehensive Conservation Planning Begins

Help Plan the Future of the Sacramento, Delevan, Colusa, and Sutter National Wildlife Refuges

This is the first in a series of planning updates developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to keep you informed about and invite your participation in a conservation planning process for the Sacramento, Delevan, Colusa, and Sutter National Wildlife Refuges (NWRs). These refuges are part of the Sacramento NWR Complex. Help us shape the future of these refuges as we develop a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), to guide management of the refuges for the next 15 years.

This Planning Update provides a brief background of the refuges, and describes the planning process and public involvement

opportunities. We will be sending planning updates periodically to local landowners, government agencies, private organizations, and others who express interest.

Who We Are and What We Do

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is the primary federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. Specific responsibilities include enforcing federal wildlife laws, managing migratory bird populations, restoring nationally significant fisheries, administering the Endangered Species Act, and restoring wildlife habitat.

The Service also manages the National Wildlife Refuge System, the world's largest

collection of lands specifically managed for fish and wildlife. The System is a network of more than 540 national wildlife refuges encompassing over 93 million acres of public land and water. Over 5,000 species of wildlife are found on refuges across the country.

Refuges are also unique places for people. A refuge can provide wildlife-dependant public uses such as hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation, when these uses are deemed compatible with wildlife and habitat needs and the purposes for which the refuge was established.

Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Located in California's northern Sacramento Valley, the Sacramento NWR Complex is comprised of five national wildlife refuges and three wildlife management areas. **This CCP will include only the Sacramento, Delevan, Colusa and Sutter NWRs.** A CCP for the Sacramento River NWR is near completion, and the three wildlife management areas will be included in a separate CCP at a later date.

The four refuges considered in this CCP provide nearly 24,000 acres of wetland and upland habitat critical to waterfowl and other wetland dependant species. About 40 percent of the Pacific Flyway's waterfowl spend their winter in the Sacramento Valley. Even though, the vast majority of the habitat that these birds depend on has been converted to agricultural, industrial and urban developments. As a result, refuge habitats must be intensively managed to optimize wildlife benefits for a variety of resident and migratory species.

Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge

Established in 1937, the Sacramento NWR is comprised of 10,919 acres of seasonal marsh, permanent ponds, and upland habitats that are located seven miles south of Willows, California. These habitats typically support in excess of 750,000 ducks and 300,000 geese, as well as 18 listed or candidate species that are threatened or endangered species. The visitor center, auto tour route, and wetlands walking trail accommodate more than 70,000 visitors per year. In addition, waterfowl and pheasant hunting account for 7,000 visits annually.

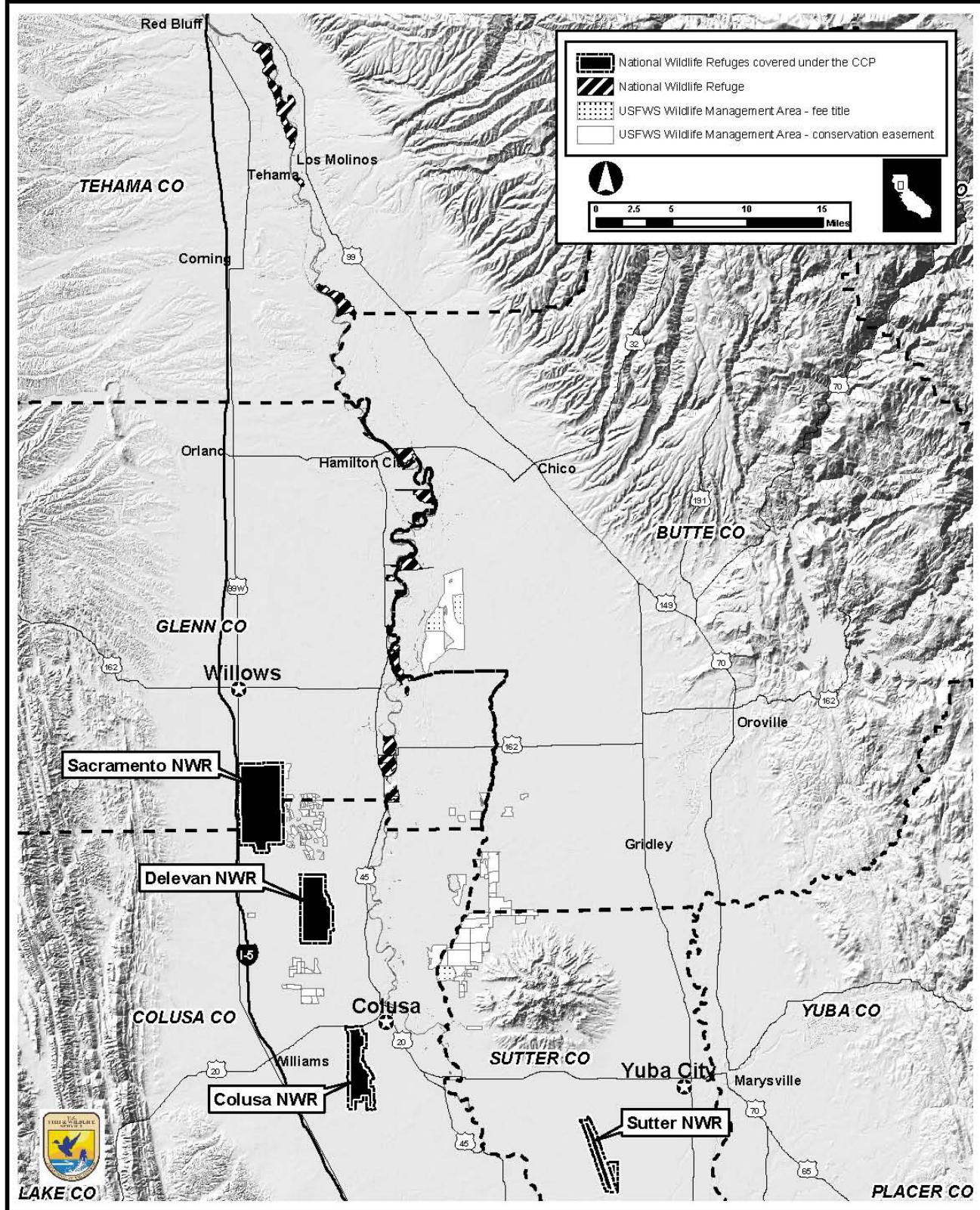
Delevan National Wildlife Refuge

Delevan NWR was established in 1962 and currently consists of 5,797 acres of seasonal marsh, permanent ponds, and upland habitats located approximately four miles east of Maxwell, California. This refuge supports more than 300,000 ducks and 100,000 geese, and several endangered plants and animals-some unique to the Sacramento Valley. A primitive Watchable Wildlife site is located on the south boundary of the refuge. Waterfowl and pheasant hunting account for approximately 5,600 visits annually.

Colusa National Wildlife Refuge

The Colusa NWR was established in 1945. It contains 4,626 acres of seasonal marshes, permanent ponds, and upland habitats located two miles west of Colusa, California. The Refuge supports more than 200,000 ducks and 100,000 geese, along with several threatened or endangered species including the giant garter snake. An auto tour route and hiking trail accommodate more than 20,000 visitors annually. Waterfowl and pheasant hunting account for an additional 3,800 visits per year.

National Wildlife Refuge Properties in the Sacramento Valley



Sutter National Wildlife Refuge

Established in 1945, Sutter NWR constitutes 2,591 acres of seasonal marsh, permanent ponds, riparian forest, and upland habitats located five miles south of Sutter, California. The majority of the refuge is located within the Sutter Bypass of the Sacramento River. Sutter NWR supports more than 200,000 ducks and 100,000 geese. The 400 acres of riparian habitat provides for a variety of migratory songbirds, including the threatened yellow-billed cuckoo. Waterfowl and pheasant hunting account for approximately 2,500 visits annually.



Illustration by Jennifer Isola

The Comprehensive Conservation Plan

In 1997, Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act. The Act presented the mission for the Refuge System, and states that all wildlife refuges must have a CCP in place by the year 2013. These plans provide a 15-year guide, using the best available scientific knowledge, to help refuge managers achieve the purposes for which each refuge was established, and contribute to the mission of the Refuge System. The Act provides the Service with guidance for managing refuges in a way that ensures the long-term

conservation of fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats. Maintenance of biological integrity and diversity along with facilitating compatible wildlife-dependent recreation in the refuge system are two of the important principles laid out in the Act.

The CCP not only provides refuge managers with a blue print for resource management, it also provides communities in the vicinity of a refuge with a clear picture of what the refuge intends to do in terms of managing habitat, protecting wildlife, and providing a place where people can enjoy wildlife-dependant activities.

Along with the CCP, the Service completes an environmental assessment (EA), that evaluates the impacts of the management direction proposed in the CCP as well as other alternatives.

Why Does the Service Prepare CCPs?

Refuges gain a lot through the CCP process. The opportunity to engage a wide range of people in planning refuge management, is perhaps one of the most beneficial aspects of the CCP planning process. We hope to strengthen the partnerships we have today and forge new ones as the process develops.

The CCP will identify goals, objectives, and management strategies for the Sacramento, Delevan, Colusa and Sutter NWRs for a 15-year period. The Service is preparing this CCP for the following reasons:

- To ensure that management of the refuges reflect refuge purposes and the mission, policies, and goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System.
- To provide the public with information about and opportunities to provide input on management actions planned for the refuges.

- To provide vision statements for the refuges.
- To ensure the compatibility of current and future uses of the refuges
- To provide long-term continuity in refuge management.
- To provide budget justifications for operation, maintenance, and facility development requests.

The CCP will be flexible. It will be reviewed periodically to ensure that its goals, objectives, and implementation strategies and timetables are still appropriate.

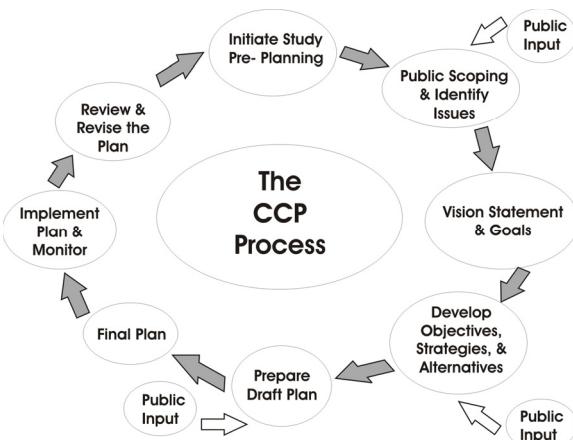
The CCP will provide broad management direction and guidance for the refuges. The accompanying EA will describe the alternatives considered and their environmental effects. You will have an opportunity to review and comment on the Draft CCP and EA.

Planning Process

Developing a long-term plan takes two to four years. The key planning steps are listed below. Currently, we are identifying issues and gathering data. This list will be included in future planning updates so you can track our progress through the planning process.

- Identify Public and Agency Issues.
- Gather Data.
- Develop Goals and Objectives.
- Develop Management Strategies.
- Evaluate Environmental Impacts.
- Prepare the Draft CCP/EA.
- Conduct a Public Review of and Comment Period for the Draft CCP/EA.

- Review public comments.
- Prepare Final CCP.
- Issue a Public Notice of Decision.
- Implement CCP.



What Does the CCP Mean to Me?

Comprehensive conservation planning is a way for you to be involved in the future management of the refuges. Whether you hunt, birdwatch, photograph wildlife, or live next door, this planning project will mean different things to each individual. The Service wants to hear from everyone with an interest in the future of Sacramento, Delevan, Colusa or Sutter NWRs. This is a chance to voice your ideas and concerns.

Help Us Plan the Future

You are invited to our three public scoping meetings for the CCP. They will be held in Willows, Colusa, and Yuba City. The Service will cover the same information at each meeting in order to provide communities in the vicinity of the refuges with opportunities to meet with refuge staff, learn more about the refuges, and help us identify issues to be addressed in the planning process.

Public Scoping Meeting Locations

Where: Willows Memorial Hall
525 W. Sycamore St.
Willows, CA

When: 6:00PM to 8:00 PM.
Date: July 6, 2005

Where: Colusa Fairgrounds
1303 10th Street
Colusa, CA

When: 6:00PM to 8:00 PM.
Date: July 12, 2005

Where: Veterans Hall
146 Garden Highway
Yuba City, CA
When: 6:00PM to 8:00 PM.
Date: July 14, 2005

Please join us, have some refreshments and share your thoughts about the refuges. We welcome your suggestions, questions and comments.

For More Information

If you have questions, comments, concerns, or would like information about the refuges, please feel free to call, e-mail, or write us:

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Visit us online at
<http://pacific.fws.gov/planning> or
<http://sacramentovalleyrefuges.fws.gov>.

Call or write to us to be placed on our mailing list or to report a change in your mailing address, or if you want to be removed from the mailing list.



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